

## Virtual Globetrotters

Paul Meldrum and Gary Brown, two ISTE members from down under, show us that educational leadership is the same the world over.

Australia is a hotbed of Ed Tech activity. The Australian Council for Computers in Education is one of many active ISTE Affiliates in Australia, and through the New South Wales Computer Education Group it has brought ISTE two active educational leaders: Paul Meldrum and Gary Brown. Like many of our members, both of these men were so effective at using technology to teach that they were soon promoted out of the classroom. They miss working with students on a day-to-day basis, but Gary says they “try to spend as much time working with kids as possible.” And they have risen to the challenge of leading educators in the appropriate blend of technology and pedagogy.

One of the many tasks on their plates is staying abreast of happenings throughout the world. “Being advisers to the systems, we’ve got to have knowledge of what’s happening, not just in the U.S. but also all around the world,” says Paul. Paul and Gary have

**Name:** Paul Meldrum

**Title:** Senior Education Officer

**Location:** Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Broken Bay, New South Wales, Australia

**Dream technology:** “Technology that allows discovery and playing, not technology that wants to be locked down.”

**Historical/famous person he’d like to bring into the classroom:** “Galileo—he was locked up on account of his knowledge.”

**Name:** Gary Brown

**Title:** Professional Officer, Learning Technologies

**Location:** Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia

**Why he got involved in Ed Tech:** “In the early 1980s when computers began coming around, I became interested in them. ... You could see the transformation of power with the computer; even back then, it engaged the children.”

**Historical/famous person he’d like to bring into the classroom:** “Seymour Papert. He can come to my classroom anytime. If he was alive, I’d have John Lennon come to the classroom because of his creativity. We don’t have much creativity anymore.”

Photos and story by L&L staff



Paul Meldrum



Gary Brown



traveled to Asia and the United Kingdom to understand the innovations in education in those regions and to share their own knowledge. They also are working with the Ministry of Education in Canada to create a network to help teachers around the world share knowledge and access the many repositories of educational resources.

They piggybacked a visit to ISTE's 2003 National Educational Computing Conference (NECC) in Seattle, Washington, on their Canada trip. NECC brings together educators from around the world to share experiences, ideas, and promising practices. Paul and Gary took full advantage of this international forum.

The exhibit hall blew them away. They were able to meet the founders of companies whose products their schools are using. Paul says, "We don't have physical access like that, even at our national conference."

The face-to-face connection they experienced at NECC was a huge benefit of attending the conference. Says Gary, "The networking is very important. ... For us, it's important to meet people who may offer us an opportunity to visit their school environment." Paul adds, "And that's a strategy that we continue in professional development. We've got the

various strategies that the system provides which give various individual experiences."

Gary points out the importance of seeing these individual experiences at NECC. He saw many "actual teachers talking about their experiences," which showed him "that the struggles that teachers are having in Australia are the same struggles that teachers worldwide are having." Both he and Paul hope to take not only this observation but also the knowledge of what works and what doesn't work back to the teachers they work with.

In addition to NECC, ISTE's hand in research and dissemination is very valuable. Says Gary, "We have to base a lot of our endeavors on good research, and ISTE coordinates that." Paul was surprised to learn of ISTE's Center for Applied Research on Educational Technology (CARET, <http://caret.iste.org>) at NECC. He believes research repositories such as CARET are valuable around the world. Paul and Gary were both happy to learn they could use the ISTE Web site to get access to *Learning & Leading with Technology* articles sooner than the printed magazines can make their way through international mail. (Each issue is posted as full text accessible by members by the first of each month

during the academic year—except for the December/January issue, which is posted by December 15 each year.) Of course, as Paul points out, when the research and other information "gets here, it's still very valuable."

Paul and Gary face many of the same challenges faced by educational leaders in other countries. According to Paul, Australia is "running out of teachers." Both Paul and Gary also point out the problem of time. Says Gary, "We have an overcrowded curriculum. We're expecting teachers to do more and more and then we say also use these technology tools?"

But their greatest challenge, according to Gary, is not technological. "Our challenge is a pedagogical one. I can get technology into any school and to any teacher." Gary says he really spends his time making sure the teachers understand the pedagogy, how technology can "enhance teaching and learning." Paul believes the solution to this challenge is "providing teachers with the skills and the motivation to be adult learners, active learners." With the passion both Paul and Gary exhibit toward enhancing teaching and learning throughout Australia and the world, it is obvious they are up to solving just about any challenge they meet.